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THE LEMON GROVE

REVIEW



Commentary

Prop. L fans should try library districts

by Joe Naiman

The failure of Proposition L at the polls does not mean that the public is not willing to support libraries. Maybe the public just doesn't trust the process.

The very fact that the authors needed to raise sales tax shows that our elected officials place a low priority on libraries. After all, if the money we have already entrusted them isn't being used to fund the libraries we want, what guarantees are there that new sales tax money would be used any better?

The new money was to be earmarked specifically toward library purposes, but what would keep elected officials moving existing library funds over to something else? Would the new tax money be spent on books or facilities? The chance of having the extra money spent on administration was enough to deter some voters from supporting the extra tax.

The biggest reason many

voters opposed the tax was the fear that their community would be paying more money than it would be receiving, and their money would be siphoned to support the city of San Diego.

Prop. L stipulated pro-rata funding, which means that money for libraries would be based on money spent. That works in favor of towns with car dealerships, shopping malls and other large sources of revenues, and against bedroom communities and towns whose stores feature less expensive wares.

If the voters were assured not only that the money would be spent on the needs of library users but, also, that the money spent by a community would be spent in that community, Prop. L may have received greater support.

That is why the concept of library districts may be the solution to the funding needs of community libraries.

I live in an unincorporated

area. We have no city council. Our fire and paramedic services are provided by a fire protection district and our water is provided by a water district.

When my property tax money goes to the fire protection district, it is used for fire or paramedic services. There is some administration involved, but at least the money received by the district is all spent on matters related to fire protection or medical aid.

Unlike residents of incorporated cities, I don't have to worry about that money

being siphoned off to another department.

When I pay my water bill, the money all goes to the water district. Some money is used for administration, but the money received by the district is all spent on water-related items.

If a water department of a city makes a profit that money may go into the general fund, but if my water district operates in the black that money goes to capital gains or reserves, to be used for water purposes.

When I pay my property

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The Lemon Grove Review, Box 127, Lemon Grove, CA 91946 • (619) 469-0101 • Published Tuesdays and Thursdays. Adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation in Superior Court of State of California in and for San Diego County, December 5, 1949. Entered as Third Class matter in La Mesa, CA. • Adjudication Number 155392 • \$20 yearly in San Diego County, \$40 yearly elsewhere in U.S.A. • Steven Saint, Publisher - Assistants to the publisher: Cheryl Cohen, Trudy Thomas, Mary Rosen • Submissions - Letters, editorial and photo submissions are welcome, but will not be returned to sender unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope. • Material can be sent via e-mail at the following address: ssaint@adnc.com. • All materials must be received by the Monday preceding the date of publication. The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions.

Vol. 51, No. 54

